

CATEGORY "A"

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
THE SECRETARY

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April 23, 1968

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR,  
MR. DOBRYNIN

SUBJECT: Berlin

Mr. Dobrynin asked for an appointment in order to reply to two points which I had raised in my conversation about Berlin on April 16. The first had to do with the continuation and locale of further contacts between Washington and Moscow. Mr. Dobrynin said that the Soviet Union was ready to continue bilateral contacts and that the choice between Washington and Moscow was subject to the convenience of the President of the United States; either Washington or Moscow would be agreeable to them.

He then turned to the question I had raised both in Geneva and in my talk on April 16 about the connection between their access proposals and the presence of Western forces in West Berlin. He said that his government had confirmed that USSR views on this point were as set forth by Mr. Khrushchev and in our talks at Geneva. The Soviet Government "cannot accept an agreement providing for the continuation of the occupation regime and the further stay of occupation forces in West Berlin. The Soviet position has been stated more than once and is absolutely clear."

He continued that the Soviet Government "attaches great importance to the search for a mutually acceptable solution and wishes to come to an agreement with the US side on a German peace treaty and the normalization of the situation in West Berlin on that basis". He added that the present situation "does not respond to the interests of the US and the USSR". "There are people", he said, "who are trying to intimidate the USSR on these matters." "They would not accept a response to the peaceful policy of the Soviet Union by actions taken against the maintenance of peace."

He added

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He added that the Soviet Government considers that a solution of a German peace treaty would correspond to the interests of all sides and that both sides must do everything necessary so that the problem could find its solution without unnecessary delay.

He concluded by saying that the situation on substantive grounds was as it was in Geneva. I ascertained that his government in fact had no preference for the locale of further talks and that there was nothing in his instructions other than a readiness to continue the talks in either capital.

I then asked him whether the use of the words "continuation of occupation regime" and "further stay of occupation forces" was connected to our earlier discussions about the status of West Berlin rather than about the presence of Western forces themselves. There was nothing in his instruction to clarify this point but he indicated that he thought the presence of Western forces was involved and not merely the question of status. I pointed out that there was some possibility that some agreement might be found on questions of status but that we had made it clear that the presence of Western forces was not negotiable.

We concluded this portion of the discussion by reference to our personal schedules. He would be away for the next two days and I reminded him that I would be away during the first ten days of May. If further discussion is to be held in Washington, it seemed convenient to have one toward the end of this week and then we could determine what might follow thereafter. I remarked that the absence of the Secretary of State did not preclude the possibility of transaction of normal business since we always had an Acting Secretary carrying full responsibility.

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